

ANNEX  
STACK

# ORDINATION CHARGE

BY THE

REV. WM. COCKER, D.D.,

TO THE

## YOUNG MINISTERS ORDAINED

AT THE

### METHODIST NEW CONNEXION CONFERENCE,

AURORA, CANADA, 1867.

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PUBLISHED BY REQUEST OF THE CONFERENCE.  
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LONDON, CANADA:

J. CAMERON, PRINTER, ADVERTISER OFFICE, DUNDAS STREET, WEST,

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## ORDINATION CHARGE

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REV. WILLIAM COCKER, D.D.

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“Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it.”—Col. iv. 17.

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**M**Y DEAR BRETHREN,—Before offering any observations in relation to your future course, allow me most cordially to congratulate you on the honourable position which you now occupy as fully accredited ministers in that section of the Church of Christ which you have chosen as your spiritual home, and as the sphere of your ministerial labours. Be assured that you can rise to a loftier elevation, and realize a higher honour than you have already gained, only by faithfully discharging the duties of that sacred office to which you have now been formally and solemnly dedicated. Gladly would I address to you, on the present occasion, such words of counsel, of caution, and of encouragement as may tend to guide you amidst the perplexities, to guard you amidst the perils, and to invigorate you amidst the difficulties of your ministerial career. May He who has counted you worthy of this high and holy calling bless this service to your good, and through you make it a blessing to thousands. I would ask your attention to the words of the Apostle Paul to Archippus:—“Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it.” If I could

suppose that you have not received the ministry in the Lord, but have chosen it merely as a respectable profession, or as furnishing opportunities for intellectual culture and literary pursuits, I would entreat you, in the interests of the Church and for the sake of your own soul, to relinquish it without a moment's hesitation, that you may escape the remorse and condemnation of those to whom an insulted and angry God will say, in tones more terrible than the thunders of the last day—"What hadst thou to do to declare my judgments, and to take my covenant into thy mouth?" But assuming *that* to which, I trust, your own consciences bear witness in the sight of God, that you have been divinely called to the work of the ministry, I would direct your attention to some of those things which are necessary to the fulfilment of the momentous charge which has been committed to you.

The importance of the Christian ministry cannot be overestimated. In the magnitude of its interests, and the vast range of its operations, it rises immeasurably above every other calling. It has been ordained for the conversion of sinners and the edification of saints; for bringing men into the Church, and for raising them to the ripest state of knowledge and holiness; for moulding the precious material of the Church into the purest and noblest forms of spiritual excellence. If the ministry be distinguished by deep and ardent piety, lofty intelligence, and glowing zeal, it will impress these glorious attributes upon the Church; and under its instructions and influences the Church will increase in mental strength and moral glory, and become more and more assimilated to the likeness of Christ, her living head. If you would contribute your due proportion of influence towards the accomplishment of these sublime purposes, you must, by the blessing of God, fulfil the ministry which you have received. In order to this, you must—

I. Be careful to keep your own hearts in harmony with the truths which you will have to preach, and the duties you will have to inculcate; otherwise, you will be unfit for the proper exposition of those truths, and for the due enforcement of those duties. Every sermon you compose will be a tremendous indictment against yourselves, and will be delivered with feelings of self-reproach and shame. Many questions have been proposed to you respecting your personal piety, and that which our churches have deemed it of paramount importance to ascertain, must continue to be the subject of your solicitude and prayers. Whilst you seek the salvation of others, you must not allow the life of God to languish in your own souls. You must set apart some portion of your time for communing with your own hearts, and with him who is the "Searcher of hearts," as well as for the improvement of your minds and the preparation of your pulpit discourses. Whilst you read and study the Scriptures that you may expound them to others, you must read and reflect upon them with a particular view to your own growth in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. You will do well, also, to peruse the practical works and biographies of those devoted men who were as burning and shining lights in their day, that you may catch additional fervour from the hallowed fire of their devotions, and be stimulated by their examples to a diligent and prayerful cultivation of those principles and affections in which personal religion consists. From these sacred exercises of the closest you will go forth clothed with strength for the discharge of your public duties. Having "tasted, and handled, and felt the word of life," you will speak out of the abundance of a heart enriched with heavenly treasure and glowing with divine love, *with unction, and genuine pathos and power*. You will come down from the mount where you have held communion with the Holy One with

the light of his glory on the countenance of your spirits, and the fragrant odour of a Divine anointing diffusing itself over your garments, verifying the words of the poet—

“When one who holds communion with the skies  
Has filled his urn where the pure waters rise,  
And once more mingles with us meaner things,  
'Tis e'en as if an angel shook his wings;  
Immortal fragrance fills the circuit wide,  
And tells us where his treasure is supplied.”

Nor must it be overlooked that the cultivation of spiritual life in your own hearts is an *absolute condition* of increasing in the true knowledge of God, as he is revealed in his Word. To seek this knowledge merely amongst books and systems, would be to seek the living among the dead. The purest and loftiest conceptions of God are not those which are wrought out by the labour of the intellect, but those which are lighted up within us by the fire of Divine love. Love brings into the soul a light that is clearer and more convincing than any demonstration. It is that power of spiritual discernment, without which the things of the Spirit of God cannot be seen. “If any man will do his will,” says the Saviour, “he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God;” thus connecting a clear perception of the truth with a disposition to do the will of God. He speaks to the same effect in his beatitudes when he tells us that “the pure in heart shall see God.” This is true not only of the beatific vision in heaven, but also of the vision of God as revealed in the Gospel of his Son. Between the knowledge and love of God, there is a reciprocal influence that tends to the increase of both. Glowing with his love, the soul expands itself to receive his truth, and that truth shines upon the loving soul with an ever-increasing effulgence. If I dwell on this topic, it is that you may have a deep and lasting impression of its vital importance. In the acquisition of some kinds of knowledge, the affections of the heart have no direct influence; but the high-



est kind of all knowledge—the knowledge of Divine truth in its inward light and loveliness, in its spiritual beauty, and sweetness, and power—can be possessed only by the soul that loves and aspires after God as its portion. The words of Dr. Neander well deserve your attention: “Religious truths do not grow out of logic; but presupposing certain spiritual tendencies and affections they arise from immediate contact of the soul with God—from a beam of God’s light penetrating the mind that is allied to him.” The knowledge that is gained by mere intellectual research, resembles the cold light of the moon; whilst that which results from holy affections, seeking after God and finding him, is like the light of the sun—full of genial warmth and life-giving influence. Be assured, that a spiritual understanding of the truth will be a better qualification for the ministry than all the treasures of literature, whether ancient or modern.

II. To fulfil your ministry you must be diligent students of the Word of God.

The Bible is pre-eminently the book of the Christian minister. Other books he may read once and refer to occasionally, but this is his constant companion:

“Its story and precept, its promise and song,  
Ever glow in his heart and burn on his tongue.”

The whole encyclopedia of knowledge would not be a sufficient substitute for this. To be thoroughly furnished for his work, the minister must have an intimate and comprehensive acquaintance with the “lively oracles.”

And let me guard you against the erroneous idea that the Bible is so brief and simple as that it may be soon fully explored. They who think so must have formed very inadequate and unworthy conceptions of the Book in which God has made the highest manifestation of his glory, and from which he has determined to

derive his loftiest praise. After the investigations of ages, there are still undiscovered glories and ungathered treasures in that Book of books. In itself the Bible is gloriously complete. It was at first adapted by unerring wisdom to all the principles of man's nature, to all the necessities of his moral condition, and to all the unchanging relationships of his being. It is God's plan of saving sinners, and is absolutely perfect. But though complete as given by God, when is it complete as received by man? Its great facts and doctrines have not been so revealed as to secure an immediate and perfect comprehension of them in all their varied aspects and bearings, but so as to stimulate our intellectual faculties, to try our characters, and to promote our constant progress in knowledge and true holiness. Nature is complete in all its arrangements and provisions, but men are ever increasing in the knowledge of its elements, its laws, and its operations. In this, as in many other respects, there is a beautiful analogy between the works and the Word of God. The universe has been so constructed as to furnish an admirable school for the progressive instruction and discipline of our minds. Some things are too prominent to be overlooked and too palpable to be mistaken; but others lie concealed, and unfold themselves only as the recompense of long and laborious investigations. There is an outward beauty, which addresses itself immediately to the eye, but there is an inward or scientific beauty, which reveals itself to the mental vision only after patient enquiry and profound thought. And so it is with the Bible. Some things stand out on its pages in characters so illuminated and legible, that "he who runs may read;" whilst others can be discovered only by diligent research. They are like diamonds embedded in the mine, and he who would have them must go down and dig; or, to change the figure, they are like stars that lie beyond the visible firmament, and he who

would see them must avail himself of all necessary appliances And as Nature is ever telling her secrets to those who cultivate a close acquaintance with her, and ever disclosing fresh wonders and glories to recompense their toils, so you will find that new light will ever be breaking forth from the pages of God's Word upon those who endeavour to pry into its glorious mysteries, and new riches ever be discovering themselves, to reward the research of those who seek to be enriched with its golden treasures. And let me advise you, in your Bible readings and studies, to analyze, compare, and connect its various parts, so that your views of its wondrous revelations may be at once clear, comprehensive, and harmonious.

III. I would next observe, that if you would fulfil the ministry you must seek to have your minds well disciplined, and richly furnished with the stores of general knowledge. You must not cease to be students because you have successfully passed your examinations and finished your probation. You have been received into our ministry, not because your present talents and attainments are deemed sufficient for the work, but because they have been accepted as the promise of future progress. Be resolved to redeem the promise which you have thus given, and to justify the confidence thus accorded to you. Now, you can do this only by persevering study, and a progressive accumulation of mental stores. To be permanently acceptable, you must have the power of presenting the same glorious truths under new aspects, in new forms of speech, and with fresh emotions kindled by new combinations of thought and language. Old and familiar truths must have a new interest given to them by being clothed with new illustrations, and exhibited in new forms and connections. You will have to keep up a supply of sermons adapted to the wants of the Church and the ever-changing aspects of the times. And

you might as well attempt to create a world as to meet these conditions of ministerial acceptability without a mind well trained to investigation, amply stored with materials of thought, and kept in perpetual contact with truth by habits of reading, reflection, and study.

1. Read the *best books*, and read them *with care*.

A few *really good* works, *well read*, will be worth more to you than a great number superficially scanned. Never waste your time and enfeeble your minds by the perusal of flimsy and frivolous productions. Many books are like the cobweb, which is very ingeniously constructed, hangs very beautifully in the sunlight, and waves very gracefully in the breeze, but is, notwithstanding, a very unsubstantial thing. Now, why seek to clothe your minds with cobwebs, when costly and enduring raiment is within your reach? Why attempt to feed your souls with chaff, when wholesome and delicious fare is so plentiful? Why hold companionship with literary dwarfs, decked out with tinsel, when you may commune with the master spirits of our race—the illustrious living and the mighty dead? Why fritter away your time with drivelling sentimentalities, when your minds may be instructed and invigorated by the profoundest disquisitions on the works and on the Word of God, and when your hearts may be thrilled and your imaginations fired by those lofty conceptions of poetic grandeur and beauty which adorn the pages of our immortal bards? “He who would be a man of real knowledge,” says Professor Stewart, “must be content to be ignorant of many of the ephemeral productions of the day.”

2. As far as possible, pursue your studies *systematically*.

Set before you *definite* objects, and continuously seek to realize them. If your daily exercises be uncertain, as any accident may



dictate or any impulse determine, your knowledge will be superficial and fragmentary, and much of your precious time will be wasted.

3. And whilst with a diligent hand you gather materials of thought, you must be careful to cultivate the power of expressing your thoughts with *clearness, precision, and force*. Whilst you are industrious in acquiring, you must learn the art of communicating; I refer now particularly to the use of language, and the laws of composition. There never was a time when the requirements of congregations, in this respect, were so high as they are now. Make yourselves familiar, then, with the best models, and while you avoid such an imitation of them as would subject you to the charge of plagiarism, so study their excellencies as to transfuse them into your own productions. Above all, meditate on those varieties, beauties, and sublimities of style which are found in the sacred writings. For transparent simplicity, fine poetic imagery, towering grandeur, melting pathos, and lofty strains of eloquence, the Bible is incomparable. Its sentences are found scattered like glowing gems over the pages of our best writers, both in poetry and prose. Its exquisite beauties have been appropriated by its foes, to enliven and embellish their own productions, just as lovely flowers are sometimes plucked from the genial bosom of nature to decorate the dead.

4. Remember, too, that the process of acquisition and of mental growth must be unceasing. You must never become stationary, while all around you is on the advance. If you cease to grow, your ministry will lose its vivacity and charm, and you will be pitied, as belonging to a bygone age. Your ministry will become like the vapid, stagnant pool, instead of resembling in its freshness the perennial spring. A moderately gifted mind, that is constantly augmenting its stores, is preferable to one of the most splendid

endowments and of much larger attainments, that becomes stationary. If your work is to be a pleasure to yourselves and a power for good to others, your life must be one of continual growth.

IV. If you would fulfil your ministry, you must be efficient preachers of the Gospel. Preaching, though not your exclusive, will be your principal work; and if you fail in this department, it had been better both for you and our churches that you had remained at home. Failure in the pulpit cannot possibly be compensated by anything out of it. We readily adopt the words of an aged minister, to one who was just entering upon his ministerial course: "Shine on the platform, and in the parlour, and on committees, if you can, but shine in the pulpit, or you are lost." To some of the main characteristics of effective preaching, I would, therefore, ask your special attention.

1. Need I say that you will preach in vain unless you preach the Gospel? God's method of restoring a fallen world to himself must be the central theme of your ministry. Apart from the doctrine of justification through faith in the atoning sacrifice of the Saviour, and the doctrine of regeneration by the Holy Spirit, there is no hope of mercy for the guilty, and no means of spiritual renovation for the depraved.

You might describe in glowing colours those moral excellencies that blended so beautifully and harmoniously in the perfect character of Jesus, but without preaching the atonement made by his death you would only present before the eyes of men a memorial of the height from which they have fallen, and to which they can never rise again, without the healing and restoring influence of the Cross. You are commissioned to preach "Christ crucified"—to proclaim the wondrous fact that he died for our sins—to hold forth the great propitiation by which the rightful

claims and legal honours of the "King Eternal" are effectually provided for in the justification of rebels. We know there are modern Jews to whom such preaching will be a stumbling-block, and modern Greeks to whom it will be foolishness; but their counsels are not to be your guide. In opposition to the pharisaism of the one class, and the false philosophy of the other, you must preach the doctrine of a free and full salvation through the sacrificial death of the Son of God. Rather relinquish the work of the ministry, than copy the example of those who are seeking to invest the pulpit with additional attraction and power by substituting other themes for that of the glorious Gospel. Their discourses on history, or poetry, or philosophy, or ethics, or social science, or creation, or providence, though brilliant with the light of genius, and delivered with all the charms of eloquence, must, for all spiritual and saving purposes, be as cold and uninfluential as the wintry moonlight shining on the grotto of icicles. Such preaching to perishing sinners is "a delusion, a mockery, and a snare." It furnishes no reply to the grand enquiry, "What must I do to be saved?"—it directs the feet of men to no sure foundation—it leads to no "fountain for sin and uncleanness"—it conducts to no refuge from the storm. And this is equally true of those preachers whose discourses are on purely religious subjects, but who fail to proclaim the saving doctrines of the Cross. They delight to expatiate on the charms of virtue and on the smiles of Divine benignity, and their meagre and sentimental theology may be accepted by those who, like themselves, are entangled in the sophistries of a sinful heart; but it must fail to allay the disquietude and to dispel the fears of the soul that is burdened with conscious guilt. It is in vain for them to proclaim "the Lord merciful and gracious" to the anxious enquirer, while they conceal from him the only way in which mercy can come to his rescue in harmony with

the claims of eternal truth and justice. They might as well attempt to soothe the mind with sweet music amidst the convulsions of an earthquake. Regard it, my dear brethren, as the one great business of your ministry to make known the wonderful scheme in which holiness and mercy, rectitude and love unite their beams in the salvation of men. Without this the pulpit would have no saving influence. The extraction of oxygen from the atmosphere, and of light from the sun, would not more effectually deprive them of their life-sustaining properties, than the exclusion of this Gospel scheme from the pulpit would divest it of all its vitality and power. Those miracles of moral transformation that signalized the preaching of the apostles—those marvellous achievements that distinguished the times of the Reformation, when the Church arose, as by a spiritual resurrection, from the grave of Papal superstition—that mighty awakening and glorious revival of religion in which Methodism originated—and those splendid triumphs over heathenism which have crowned the labours of modern missionaries, are all attributable, under God, to the preaching of the Cross! And this is the weapon that is to be mighty, through God, in your hands, to the pulling down of strongholds, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God.

2. If you would be efficient preachers, you must faithfully declare the whole counsel of God. His character must not be mutilated and marred in your representations of it. You must make him known in his inflexible rectitude and unsullied purity, as well as in the tenderness of his compassion and riches of his grace. Some modern preachers resolve his character into the one attribute of merey, but their God has no archetype either in the Bible or the book of Nature. It is a romantic fiction—an imaginary idol, and not that God who is glorious in holiness, loving



righteousness and hating iniquity. They seek to invest Jehovah with a robe of loveliness, but they insult his majesty by plucking away his sceptre and his crown, and leaving him with the mere semblance of a throne. You must declare his judgments as well as his mercies; the power of his anger as well as the abundance of his goodness. Whilst to the weary and heavy-laden penitent your ministry must be as the beautiful bow that bends on the bosom and brightens amidst the tears of the storm, to the impenitent and unbelieving it must be as the lightnings that scathe and as the thunders that appal. Your representations of God's truth must be such as shall bring peace to the troubled conscience, and yet quicken its sensibility; such as shall soothe the mind by the assurances of Divine mercy, and yet solemnize it by the exhibition of Divine majesty; such as shall constrain men to bow with profound reverence before God's awful throne, and yet to show them how they may draw near to that throne on earth, and sit down amidst its splendours in heaven, as a throne of grace accessible here, and a throne of glory inheritable for ever. Thus will your ministry harmonize with the redeeming work of Jesus, which brings God near to us in his mercy and grace, and yet enthrones him in honour and majesty as a righteous Ruler.

Let nothing betray you into unfaithfulness as ministers of God. You had better be stigmatized falsely as the advocate of a gloomy and repulsive theology—better be loaded with the most opprobrious epithets that offended sinners can heap upon you—better expose yourself to the bitterest scorn and most burning indignation that can result from wounded pride and exasperated enmity against God—better go from the pulpit to the pestilential dungeon, or to the flames of martyrdom, for your fidelity, than prove unfaithful to your solemn trust.

If you should prophecy smooth things to them that are ready

to perish, and lead them to make "lies their refuge, and to hide themselves under falsehoods," your own hearts will condemn you, souls deluded and destroyed will curse you, and an angry God will require their blood at your hands. Whilst, if you are faithful, you will have the approving testimony of your own consciences, and the benediction of him whose favour outweighs a world of censure and transcends a universe of praise. At the same time, let me guard you against the mistake of those who seem to suppose that the faithful preaching of the Word requires that they should be perpetually using terrific phraseology. When such awful words as "hell" and "damnation" are called for, no regard for the delicate sensibilities or fastidious tastes of your hearers must restrain you from employing them. But do not suppose that such language is necessary to give solemnity and impressiveness to a discourse, to rouse the slumbering conscience, or to affect the insensible heart. You do not find it in Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost, and yet what sermon was ever more pungent and powerful? It is said that President Edwards' sermon, entitled "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God," was one of the most awful and affecting exhibitions of truth ever made from the pulpit, and yet it is not remarkable for this kind of language. And, on the other hand, a sermon may be freely interspersed with such phraseology, and yet not be faithful to the truth of God. If you would have an example of ministerial integrity, behold the Apostle of the Gentiles. See him standing as a captive before the tyrannical Felix and the profligate Drusilla; and mark with what fearlessness and faithfulness he reasoned on righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, selecting such topics of discourse as were directly opposed to the criminal passions and practices of those who had his liberty in their hands! Behold him as a lonely stranger on Mars Hill. He is surrounded with

monuments of beauty and grandeur, dedicated to the glory of Athens and the worship of the gods; he has before him the most learned men of that renowned city; he stands before the very tribunal which condemned to death the purest and most patriotic of their own sages for alleged hostility to their religious rites: and how does he conduct himself in a situation so critical and so trying? Does he falter in the avowal of his faith? Does he seek to flatter his illustrious auditors? No; but with the magnanimity and majesty of a divinely authorized ambassador he denounces their idolatry, and demands their homage for the one true God.

3. If your preaching is to be successful, it must be suited to the requirements of your hearers. The truths which you have to preach are unchangeable, and are adapted to men of all classes and conditions throughout all time; but they were at first clothed in a costume, and conveyed in a manner, suited to the peculiar views and customs of the people to whom they were addressed. And there can be no doubt that if they had been given to the world in our own day, they would have differed as much in their mode of presentations as Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews differs from his Epistle to the Romans, and as much as his profound and philosophical discourse on the resurrection differs from both these epistles. Human nature in its radical element changes not, but in its development and outward aspects it is ever changing, and the mode of exhibiting the truth by which it is to be influenced must be fitted to these changes. In order to this, a minister must not only have a general knowledge of human nature, but a particular acquaintance with it as it appears in his own times. Sin is always the same in its abstract nature, but it assumes endless varieties of form according to the temperament, the education, the temptations, the interests, and the pursuits of men, and he who would successfully oppose it must understand its Protean forms. Old

errors put on new faces, and require corresponding modes of assault. Rationalism, Romanism, and Infidelity are ever assuming new aspects, and he who would counteract their pestilent influence must be able to trace them through all their "tortuous sinuosities," to tear off their subtle disguises, and expose them in all their hideous deformities. Endeavour, then, to understand the characteristics and tendencies of your own times, the relative positions of truth and error, and the various antagonistic forces with which you have to contend. By familiar intercourse with those to whom you will have to minister the "Word of Life," get an intimate acquaintance with their temptations and trials, their doubts and difficulties, their prejudices and passions, their desires and aspirations, that you may penetrate into the inmost recesses of their hearts, and be able to administer instruction, reproof and consolation, as their different cases may require. Of what avail would it be to prepare sermons distinguished by profound thought, logical power, rhetorical beauty, and all the qualities of elaborated and finished compositions, if they were not fitted to the capacities and conditions of those who hear them.

4. A good pulpit delivery is essential to effective preaching. The following extract from the biography of Whitfield deserves your attention:—"Whitfield sought out acceptable tones, and gestures, and looks, as well as acceptable words." Was Whitfield right? Then many are far gone. Let the rising ministry take warning. "Awkwardness in the pulpit is a sin; monotony is a sin; dulness is a sin and all of them are sins against the welfare of immortal souls. There was a remarkable simplicity of style in Whitfield's sermons; but I believe the extraordinary effects which attended their delivery were owing still more to his captivating eloquence. Promiscuous thousands hung upon his lips with almost breathless awe. But if his sermons had been delivered



with the monotonous cadence and somnolent tones of some preachers, their results would have been very different. The human voice is one of the grandest instruments that the Creator has fashioned, and its cultivation is a duty binding upon all, and especially upon the Christian minister. I speak with deference in the presence of so many ministerial brethren, and not without some feeling of self-accusation, when I say that, in my humble judgment, the importance of this matter has not been sufficiently felt. All are not equally gifted in this respect, but much may be done by those who are the least favoured. It is said of that famous orator whose eloquence "fulminated over Greece and shook the throne of Macedon," that, in the first instance, he was hissed from the rostrum because of his extreme awkwardness. But he went to work with an invincible determination to surmount every obstacle, and at length acquired a power of oratory by which he agitated, swayed, and impelled the nation at his pleasure. Whatever can be done should be done to acquire an agreeable and forcible delivery. It is the wonderful power by which one mind concentrates the light of its intelligence on other minds, and by which one heart sends the electric impulses of its sympathy through other hearts. How many good sermons are spoilt by a bad delivery; how much truth falls from the lips of a poor speaker without reaching the minds of his hearers! He parts with it, but they do not receive it, and so there is no communication. After what I have said on ministerial fidelity, you will not suppose that I wish you to become men-pleasers, except in the sense in which you should aim at being this. Far be it from you to be seeking the gratification of men's tastes when you should be probing their hearts, grappling with their consciences, and denouncing the judgments of God against their sins. But there is a sense in which you must seek to please men in order that you may please God.

5. I would now observe, with all the emphasis of which I am capable, that a good elocution and a graceful manner, however important in themselves, are not sufficient without that sympathetic earnestness which should breathe in the tones and look forth in the gestures of the man whose work it is to teach the perishing to be reconciled to God. Your manner should make it manifest that the truths you utter have passed through your own understandings and hearts, kindling in their passage corresponding sentiments and sympathies. Heart answers to heart, and feeling to feeling. That which comes from the heart is likely to reach the heart, and that which is spoken with feeling to produce feeling. How many discourses on the solemn tragedy of the Cross have failed of their proper effect, because they have been mere intellectual displays—mere dramatic exhibitions—decorated, perhaps, with the embellishment of a poetic fancy, and delivered with the pomp of tragical declamation, but bearing no evidence of having passed through a heart melted into tenderness and tears by the sacrificial sorrows of the Saviour. How many sermons on the miseries of the lost have failed to produce their proper impression, because delivered without that tender compassion, that yearning pity for the perishing, which should ever be conspicuous in such discourses. If a minister dwell on the “terrors of the Lord” as if he delighted to brandish the flaming sword of justice and to hurl the bolts of vengeance, he will fail to convince his hearers that he seeks to pluck them “as brands from the burning.” He may gesticulate and thunder, but there are certain chords of the human heart which are not to be operated on by such means, any more than you could call forth the whispering music of an *Æolian* harp by striking it with a bar of iron. Even the gracious invitations and precious promises of the Gospel will be listened to without emotion, if announced in

a cold and careless manner, God has instituted the ministry that his overtures of mercy to the rebellious, that his messages of love to his poor prodigal children, may be conveyed with all the warmth of human affections, and with all the pathos and power of Christian sympathy and love. And we can have no hesitation in saying that a sermon imbued with the spirit of an indwelling sympathy, baptized with the fervour of holy love, will be more effectual than a thousand delivered in a mere mechanical manner. An ardent love for Christ, and for the souls redeemed by his blood, will give a tenderness to your tones, and an intense solicitude to your manner, that will arrest the attention and impress the heart, when the most vociferous declamation has spent itself in vain.

6. Let me advise you to form the habit, and to cultivate the power of extemporaneous speaking. You cannot too carefully prepare for your pulpit duties, but you need not inflexibly bind yourselves to what you have prepared. By a thorough appreciation and mastery of your subject, your mind may be left free to receive any new thoughts, and to appropriate any new illustrations that may present themselves. By deviating from the proscribed line of discourse, you may occasionally stumble upon a mistake, an ill-chosen expression may escape you, and a figure may now and then be employed which the accomplished rhetorician would not approve; but these blemishes will be far more than compensated by the increased animation of your delivery, and by the new light that will flash around you, as you yield yourselves to the kindling emotions of a mind upon which the truth is breaking with new beauty, and majesty, and power.

7. Before leaving the subject of preaching, allow me to express my earnest hope that in all your private studies and pulpit ministrations you will cherish a deep sense of your absolute dependence upon the blessing of God for the success of your labours.

Listen to the words in which the Apostle Paul disclaims all self-sufficiency, and ascribes the success of the ministry wholly to God: "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth anything, neither is he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase." As the husbandman would break up his ground and sow his seed in vain without the fertilizing influences of sun and showers, so they who sow the good seed of the kingdom will do it in vain, unless the "Lord of the harvest" vouchsafe his blessing. The power that quickens the precious seed and makes it productive, is not in the sower, nor in the seed, nor in the hearts that receive it, but in the Holy Spirit. The most seraphic piety, combined with the most splendid talents, would not give you the power of converting a single soul. Your sermons, however lofty in sentiment and profound in thought, however logical in argument and beautiful in illustration, however well adapted to the peculiarities of your hearers, and however forcibly delivered, must fall dull and powerless on the ear, unless accompanied by the life-giving influences of the Divine Spirit. What an instructive and impressive testimony the Saviour bears at once to the reality and importance of the Spirit's influence, in the words addressed to his disciples: "It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment." May this promised Comforter ever be with you, and dwell in you, clothing your minds with strength, and crowning your ministry with success!



V. And now, in the last place, I would ask your attention to a few remarks on the character and deportment which, as ministers, you should endeavor to maintain. The requirements of some men, as to a minister's conduct, are most unreasonable and foolish. They would have him to be something more than a man, or, it may be, something less. He must not betray the common sympathies and sensibilities of human nature. He must put off the garb of manhood when he puts on the robe of the minister. And it not unfrequently happens that they who are the most irregular and defective in their own conduct, are the most exacting in their demands upon him. Now, whilst these self-constituted guardians of ministerial propriety are entitled to little notice, you must bear in mind that it is a rightful requirement of society that a minister should be a man of exemplary conduct; that the graces and virtues of the religion which he preaches to others should be seen clustering in fair and fit proportion around his own character, and shedding their beautiful light upon his own course; that his life should be an exemplification of all that is pure and lofty in principle, generous and noble in spirit, and upright and honorable in action.

Amidst the many temptations and perils that will beset your path, you must—

1. Scrupulously and prayerfully guard against the seductive influences of those who would drag you down to their own level of frivolty and foolishness, and then, whilst praising you with their lips as genial, companionable, and the like, despise you in their hearts for having descended from the dignified position which an ambassador of the Cross should ever occupy.

2. Watch and pray against that spirit of vanity and pride which has proved fatal to so many Christian ministers. Vanity displays itself in an eager solicitude to secure the admiration and

applause of men. The love of praise is natural, and, if properly regulated, may contribute to virtue and usefulness. But if it be allowed to pass beyond certain bounds, it becomes vanity, and is as a blighting mildew on the moral affections of the soul, and a barrier in the way of usefulness. If a minister allow himself to indulge it, he may sacrifice all that is noble at its shrine. It may lead him to the pitiable meanness, the detestable dishonesty of lowering another's reputation for the purpose of raising his own. Pride, on the other hand, may show itself in an indifference to the good opinion of others. It wraps a man up in himself. It renders a man haughty, supercilious, arrogant, and overbearing in his conduct toward others. Both are most unseemly and inconsistent in a minister, whose business it is to hold up the example of Him who was "meek and lowly in heart," and to warn men against the "pride that goeth before destruction," and against that haughtiness of spirit which is the sure precursor of a fall.

3. But whilst a minister should not be proud and presumptuous, he should respect himself, and allow no man to trifle with his honour, much less to trample it in the dust. A cringing spirit of abject servility and voluntary degradation is contemptible in any man, and it is especially so in the Christian minister. Whilst you are not to tyrannize over any man, not even the poorest member of the Church, you must resolve that, God being your helper, no man shall ever be permitted to tyrannize over you, whatever his position or power. It is pitiable to see a man employing his power to humiliate a minister of God; but it is still more pitiable to see a minister bending his neck beneath the yoke of the tyrant, like a craven, crestfallen coward, when he should stand erect in the spirit of a man and the dignity of a minister. When brazen insolence lifts its head, and sets its mouth against all propriety, you

must be prepared to rebuke it, though it may be clothed with purple and decked with gold. A minister is bound to respect himself, as well as to respect others, and if he fail to do this, he will not only dishonour his own name, but degrade his sacred office and damage the Church of God.

4. Cultivate a spirit of fraternal love and generous sympathy towards those with whom you are associated in the work of the ministry. Keep yourselves at the greatest possible distance from those petty jealousies and personal animosities which tend to bring the ministry into contempt. Take care not to depreciate a brother's gifts and labours merely because they differ from your own.

"There are diversities of gifts, but it is the same God that worketh all and in all." You and your brethren are fellow-labourers in the same vineyard; and it is, perhaps, as impossible to say what kind of labour conduces most to the harvest which is to be ultimately reaped, as to say which day of the season contributes most largely to the luxuriance of the summer and the golden fruits of autumn. He who plants, and he who waters, should feel that they are engaged in one common work; each should respect the office and employment of the other, and both should labour together in harmony, as they expect to rejoice together when the final results of their toils shall be gathered and garnered amidst the jubilant songs that shall celebrate the general harvest of the world. I cannot prolong this address by particularizing in relation to the conduct that becomes a minister of the Gospel. A due appreciation of the importance and grandeur of your work, as those who have to "beseech men in Christ's stead" to be reconciled to God, and an intense desire to be successful, will supply the place of a thousand rules, and make you most anxious to comply with the apostle's injunction: "Giving no offence in anything, that

the ministry be not blamed: but in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God; by pureness, by knowledge, by kindness, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and the left."

Let me, then, in conclusion, once more remind you of the magnitude and glory of the work to which, amidst the throbbing sympathies, the good wishes, and the fervent prayers of this congregation, you have been solemnly set apart. In its principles, purposes, and practical results this work is identified with the mysterious incarnation, the sacrificial death, and the mediatorial reign of the Son of God. You have to co-work with Him in bringing about those grand designs for which he became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, and for which he now sits enthroned in regal majesty at the right hand of God. The ministry holds a distinguished place in that great system of means by which God is restoring a fallen world unto himself. It looks beyond the temporary wants of the body, and the transient interests of time, to the spiritual necessities of man's immortal nature, and the vast concerns of an eternal state. Its results will remain when the proudest monuments of this world shall have mouldered into dust, and when the world itself shall have passed away. Surely, then, a work so transcendently glorious deserves the noblest powers that can be consecrated to it, and will more than compensate for any possible amount of labour. In such a work nothing should discourage you. You may have to "weep in secret places" because of the hardness of men's hearts, but you must not grow weary in well-doing, assured, as you are that "they who go forth weeping, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again rejoicing, bringing their sheaves with them." God only knows how many benighted souls shall be enlightened, how many wounded hearts shall be healed, how many drooping spirits shall



be cheered, how many death-beds shall be rendered peaceful and triumphant, and how many departing souls shall be lighted up with visions of imperishable glory through your instrumentality. You work for eternity; and eternity alone, with its ever-brightening glories and ever-augmenting joys, will be sufficient to reveal all the results of your faithful labours. What an illustrious distinction, and what a solemn responsibility, to be engaged in a work like this! Tell me not of those who have embodied their genius and embalmed their memories in the breathing marble or the speaking canvas, in lofty songs or sublime orations, in political enactments or military triumphs, in mechanical inventions or scientific discoveries; but give me the joy, the glory, the rapture of those who, having finished their course and fulfilled the ministry of reconciliation committed unto them, shall hear their Master say, "Well done!"

Our hearts' desire and prayer to God in your behalf are, that you may long be "burning and shining lights" in your appointed spheres, and that when you shall cease to shine on earth, you may rise to occupy a conspicuous place in that resplendent firmament, where those who "turn many to righteousness" shall shine "as the stars for ever and ever." Amen.